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ABSTRACT

The book takes a nostalgic look at one-room schools in the United States Midwest, especially in Illinois, and traces their history from about 1825 to the present. Three chapters present the development of the one-room school from 1825 to the Civil War, from after the Civil War to around 1920, and from 1920 through the Depression and the Second World War to the present. The chapters present information about rural educational equipment, teachers and students, disciplinary measures, annual activities, daily routines, curricula, school buildings of various types, and enrollments. They also include information about various commonly used text books, including the famed McGuffey's Readers. The chapters describe the effect of the consolidation movement on one-room schools and school houses, noting how few remain in the Midwest. Various school building restoration projects are also described. A final chapter presents anecdotes and legends about one-room schools. The book is illustrated with black and white photographs. (SB)

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RURAL ONE-ROOM SCHOOLS OF MID-AMERICA

By Leslie C. Swanson

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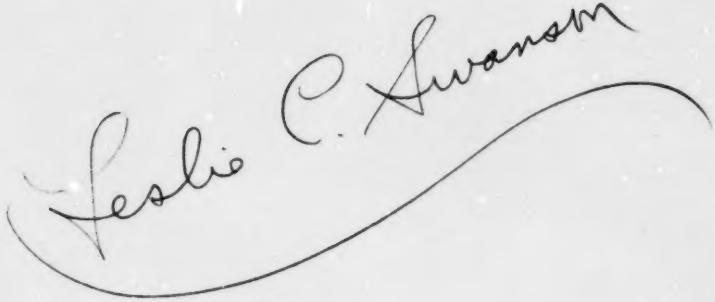

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CHAPTER I — A CENTURY OF SERVICE

Still Sits the Schoolhouse by the road,
A ragged beggar sleeping,
Around it still the sumacs grow
And blackberry vines are creeping.

— John Greenleaf Whittier

Their job is over but the one-room schools linger on in hallowed tradition, a multitude of new uses and the cherished memories of millions who attended them in the past several decades. Citadels of learning in their day, the rural schoolhouses made a substantial contribution to American democracy and the growth years of the mid-west.

Many of the buildings have been removed from the scene but thousands still stand like lonely sentinels in their original location, serving as lasting monuments to a colorful era when life's tempo moved at a much slower pace.

When the majority of schools shut their doors in the two decades between 1940 and 1960 most of the buildings went on the auction block or simply reverted to the original farms from which land was donated a century ago. A good share of the schools were converted into residences and they still sit by the side of the road resplendent with their remodeled exteriors and color combinations never used before in such rural buildings.

Others maintain most of their original shape and form but they have been relegated to the new roles of community centers, museums, antique shops, and clubhouses. Many more were put to work in the agricultural industry as implement sheds, grain bins, hog houses and such. A few more were made into roadside cafes, one became a doctor's office, one a sportsmen's club center and one suffered the ironic fate of becoming a garage for a school bus.

Still another group remains in the original location, alone and deserted slowly bowing to the ravages of time, the elements and neglect. The sight of an unmistakable schoolhouse here and there still is enough of an oddity to attract the attention and comment of passing motorists. All view with sadness the abandoned and dilapidated schoolhouses, sitting half hidden in a corner of a cornfield or almost submerged in a tangled jungle of tall weeds and small trees. The front door may be sagging on the hinges, the porch rotting away, the windows boarded up, and the siding and roof weather-beaten, as wind whistles through the deteriorating bell tower. At one side may sit a rusting piece of playground equipment and a lonely appearing water pump.

Tears might well in the eyes of former students as they survey this sad scene. "Doesn't any one care?" might be the question coming to any one's mind as he views the fading landmark. Somebody has to care if anything is done to save some of the abandoned buildings. It takes a concerted effort to get anything done in the way of a restoration project. The past abounds in the rural schools and each one of the deserted schools should provide a challenge to the historical societies or other civic groups in nearby towns.

Stopping in front of one of these old buildings, you might wonder what fascinating history each of them could tell. Most of them could relate a complete century of service to the areas they represented. You wonder where all of their former students might be today.

You can easily visualize the scene of yesteryear — the teacher standing in the doorway pulling the rope on the cupola bell or simply standing on the front porch swinging the hand bell; the girls first to come running toward the school; the boys lingering on the ball field for just one or two more clouts at the baseball before getting back to work; the school grounds resounding with happy voices and the nearby hills echoing to the sound of the bell.

Retracing their thoughts of yesteryear, many people who once attended such schools will relate to you comments such as this: "Oh what fun it was to tramp down the road daily to school. Youngsters today will never experience the carefree walk to school, which we enjoyed so much. Some of the boys went barefoot in the early weeks of fall and late spring, enjoying the dust and clay filtering through their toes. Frequently we had to plod through mud-clogged roads, torrential rain, blizzards and through sub-zero weather. The teachers themselves would have to park their cars a mile away at times and struggle down side roads which were virtually impassable due to huge snow drifts. Kids in those days did not have the luxury of school buses or mothers chauffering them back and forth as they do today."

Nearly all counties of every state in the mid-west are represented with the schoolhouses still standing as residences or other uses. Illinois has an estimated 3,000 to 3,500 old schools still standing in one form or another. Iowa is in second place with 2,000 to 2,500 school buildings still in existence out of an original stand of over 10,000. Other states in the mid-west have corresponding amounts.

It is estimated that there were 65,000 rural schools in operation in their hey day in the states of Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Indiana and Ohio. Illinois had several counties with as many as 200 schools in existence. The greatest concentration of schools in the mid-west was in LaSalle County, a large and agriculturally wealthy area in central Illinois, which contained 242 one-teacher schools.

At this writing, in a bicentennial year, a nostalgic look is taken into this phase of education's history. Illinois also celebrated a school Sesquicentennial, a year earlier reviewing a total of 150 years of history since the beginning of education in the state.

Illinois' educational history dates back to the year 1825 when the first state school law was passed and the first free school in the state was reported to have been built at Brownsville. Progress was slow in the formative years owing to inevitable controversy over the compulsory tax for educational purposes. The tax was sidetracked four years later but eventually restored in 1845. There was actually little improvement of the schools for two decades after passage of the first legislation in 1825. Illiteracy was still high, a survey showing that half of the families could not read, write or cipher in parts of the state.

Educational development in other states in the mid-west also proceeded at a slow pace with pioneer log-cabin schools the rule everywhere. The actual forerunner of education in the mid-west was the organization of local districts in

1647 in Massachusetts. From the eastern states the system of education spread into the northern and central states. Early in the nineteenth century there was a great outpouring of population into Ohio and states to the west. The pioneers had some experience with education in the east and they felt the immediate need of education for their children.

The earliest log cabin schools had little in the way of equipment. There were no individual desks, pull-down maps or blackboards as found in most rural schools after 1900. Instead of desks the seats were nothing more than long wooden benches, slabs or puncheons, all without backs. The logs used in making the schoolhouse cabins were crudely cut with mud packed between them to keep out the cold and draft. Floors were all rough and untreated or there was nothing but the earth. Oiled paper covered the windows and small oil lamps provided the only light. The roofs frequently leaked and the fireplaces provided inadequate heating. Students sitting closest to the fireplace simply roasted while others in far corners of the room shivered with their coats on.

All of the schools were operated on a part time basis with very little planning, described as "better than nothing." Many of them were taught by men who took up school work just to be occupied with something. It was customary in some districts to hire as teachers those who were in the greatest need of some means of support.

Most of the men teachers were hired on the basis of their physical appearance. The teacher had to rule the school with an iron hand and it was no place for a weak, spiritless individual. Flogging of unruly pupils was a common requirement for the early schoolmasters who were forced to maintain discipline on sheer force alone. Adding to the problem was the age of the students, which ranged all the way from five to 20 years. However, the older boys attended on a hit-or-miss basis as they were frequently kept at home to assist with the harvest in the fall and the field work in the spring.

Some of the bullies took delight in constantly harassing the schoolmasters, who were unable to maintain rigid discipline. In the Flat Creek district of southern Indiana two school teachers were driven off in one year, being physically unable to handle the trouble-makers.

Girls as well as boys felt the sting of the switch although the latter received most of the disciplinary measures. The students were punished with three different items, a flat ruler smacked on the palm of the hand, a birch rod or a switch from a sapling on the school grounds.

One of the greatest handicaps of the pioneer schools was the complete lack of regular textbooks. Nothing was standardized in the way of books. The students filled this void by bringing in whatever volumes they could find on home book shelves. The school library, if there was one, consisted of nothing more than the teacher's private stock of books. The Bible was used extensively in some schools and regular morning religious study was a part of the day's activities if the teachers and the parents had agreed on it.

Writing materials were as inadequate as everything else connected with the schooling. Notebooks were made up at home from heavy brown wrapping paper, pens were made from goose quills and ink manufactured from the bark of maple trees. Most of the students had slates with double sides for taking notes, writing and figuring. Several decades later similar slates were still observed in use in some of the rural schools.

The earliest schools had crudely made blackboards consisting of a series of planks nailed together and painted black. Erasers were nothing more than blocks of wood supporting sheepskin with the woolly side out.

The dress of the students was very simple. The girls came in crisp new calico dresses and aprons and the boys also wore plain garb although some of the older ones work hickory shirts and heavy top boots in wintertime. Both boys and girls were described as "looking much like little men and women." Men teachers also wore simple clothing while the few women instructors were pictured as wearing high necks, long and full skirts and tight-fitting waists.

The salaries paid to the teachers in pioneer days were almost unbelievable. Some worked for as low as $20 a month. In Kossuth County, Ia., men teachers received an average of $5.94 a week while the women received only $3.82 a week. The record low paid in Illinois after the Civil war was reported to be $20 a week paid in 1879 to a Pleasant Hill teacher in southern Illinois.

Despite almost insurmountable obstacles the students in the pioneer schools obtained at least a working knowledge of 'Readin' 'Riting' and 'Rithmetic' and "taught to the tune of a hickory stick."

The log cabin type of school was gradually being phased out in the period before the Civil war. Stone buildings were erected in Madison County in south central Iowa and in some of the counties close to the Mississippi River in Eastern Iowa. No figures are available by states but an 1859 census total in Iowa showed 459 log cabins still in use, 297 frame structures, 91 brick buildings and 12 of stone.

CHAPTER II — M'GUFFEY READERS

In the period after the Civil war the schools were better equipped with textbooks, which came into almost universal use. It was still more or less only rudimentary equipment but it got the job done. New laws were enacted in the various states which came to the financial rescue of the districts, putting education on a sounder basis.

More professional teachers were attracted to the positions and women were gradually replacing the men instructors in a good share of the districts. A number of young women from the New England states came to take positions in the midwest's country schools.

Some of the best known grade school textbooks of the post-Civil war era revealed an expanding curriculum available to students. The original three R's were supplemented with such subjects as history and grammar and later came something resembling civics.

The best known textbooks included the famous series of reader books of the great author, William H. McGuffey, Sniders' Union Reader, Eagan's Common School Arithmetic, the American Illustrated Primer and Child's Book for Home and School. Other well known books were Clark's Grammar, Ray's Arithmetic. Blue Back Speller and Warren's Geography.

Warren's book revealed such facts as Illinois ranking first in the 1870 census in the production of corn, topping Indiana, Missouri and Iowa in that order. Its fund of information also showed the United States with a population of 40,000,000 in

1875, New York City with 942,000 people, and London with 3,000,000. Davenport, Ia., was listed as the largest city in Iowa with 20,038 inhabitants and Dubuque was second with 18,434.

McGuffey's books had a profound effect on education in the early days. His First and Second **Electic** Readers were released in 1836; the Third and Fourth Readers in 1837, a revised edition in 1838 and a High School Reader & Rhetorical Guide in 1841. In 1878, five years after McGuffey's death, all of his books were revised and updated.

McGuffey's works all had a moral and were highly inspirational for students. They put new life into drab subjects and they contained lively tales about such things as shipwrecks, fires, disasters of all sorts and some violence.

Thanks to McGuffey, many a young student could stand up in front of a packed schoolhouse on "program night" and revive Patrick Henry with these immortal words: "I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no law of judging of the future, but by the past . . . Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God, I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death."

It is established that one-half of the school children in the U.S. were using McGuffey's readers between 1836 and 1900. The students found many good rules of life in the books: Kindness to animals, good manners, respect of elders, respect for the government, obedience, patriotism, the wisdom of early rising, reverence, honesty, truthfulness, temperance and the evils of such things as greed and waste.

Beside his reputation as a successful author, McGuffey also achieved fame in Ohio as an editor, college professor and administrator. His works were reported to have sold 122,000,000 copies. Now his books are treasured items of collectors. Some private schools are still using his books and it was recently reported that a reprint of 50,000 books was made in 1975.

As the rural schools rounded the turn of the century business went on about as usual. The principal improvement was standardization of the textbooks to some extent and a gradual widening of the subjects being taught. A few new rural schools were being built in the mid-west as consolidation talk had not yet started. At that time there was no indication of the momentous developments in education, industry, farming, inventions and history-making events which lay ahead.

It was still too early to envision the sweeping changes coming in the school program but the rural and town districts as they were then set up established some sort of foundation on which the broader system of education was to be built.

The rural schools were still popularly known as "Little Red Schoolhouses," although only brick buildings seemed to fit that description. A few were painted red with white trim but practically all others were in the same white color. Late in the nineteenth century some stone buildings were still being built in the rocky hills of northwestern Illinois and poignant reminders of that type still exist in Jo Daviess Winnebago and Stephenson counties. A few scattered stone and brick schoolhouses still stand in Iowa counties along the Mississippi River.

Many of the rural schools were located in picturesque settings, on prominent ridges, surrounded by virgin woodland, along small rivers or creeks or just on the flat plainlands of the midwest agricultural wonderland. The beauties of nature were close at hand and the solitude of the wide open prairies or the nearby forests asserted a great influence in molding the students' lives. The schools were thus ideally located for this form of outdoor education, being surrounded by the rich resources of the environment and the raw materials produced in the farm belt.

Names of many of the schools were as picturesque and intriguing as the wonders of nature, history and lore they represented. Our records of 25 years of visiting rural schools reveal all sorts of fascinating names. Names of states, famous points in history, presidents, generals, cities, old mills, birds and animals are all represented.

Some of the most picturesque names included such imaginative ones as: Little America, Young America, Wide Awake, Little Sister, Bliss, Climax, Fairplay, Olive Branch, Dry Branch, Muddy Corners, Muddy Lane, Marsh, Slough Island, Sprinkleburg, Stump Valley, Snareville, Kempersterville, Kinderhook, Piney Woods, **Five-Five,** Happy Corners, Hickory Flat, Canada Settlement, Dixie, Four Corners, Briar Bluff Flat Iron, Plugtown, Stone Street, North Star, Lone Star, Morning Star, Morning Sun, Sunbeam, Sunbury, Blue Sky, and Moon.

Others take on a college atmosphere with such designations as Cornfield College, Swamp College, Brush College, Thompson College, Hickory College, Farmers' Academy, Carbon High, and Stone Academy.

Another group included: Rural House, Town House, **House Log,** Old Town, Hamlet, Loan, Law, Lawyer, Legal Corners and one had the simple name of "Rural."

Names of several presidents, statesmen and military leaders included: Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt, Cleveland, Garfield, Wilson, Grant, Jefferson, Hayes, Buchanan, Franklin, Hamilton, Pershing and Sherman.

Animals, birds, snakes and rodents were represented by such names as Possum Valley, Skunk Hollow, Wolf, Wolf Creek, Little Beaver, Beaver Creek, Fox, Rabbit Burrow, Rabbit Hill, Wild Goose, Buffalo, Birds' Corners, **Frog Pond, Frog Pound,** Toad Hollow, Otter Bluff, Snake Hollow, Gooseneck, Deer Grove, Bear, White Eagle, Spread Eagle, Eagle Point, Parrot, Coonville, Bird, Wildcat, Gander Lane and Wolverine.

Many schools were perched on prominent hills or lofty ridges as the following names attest: Federal Hill, High Prairie, Lookout, Summit, Bald Bluff, Cyclone Heights, Rustic Hill, Windy Ridge, Brush Hill, Mosquito Hill, Pea Ridge, Mt. Zion, Champion Hill, Scaley Point, King's Hill, Pine Hill, Oak Hill, Pease Hill, Temperance Hill, East and West Science Ridge, Green Summit, Iron Hills, Brewery Hill, Pilot Hill and Bleak Knoll.

Famous names, places of history and battle grounds include: Bunker Hill, Concord, Shiloh, Normandy, Carthage, Damascus, Rome, Yale, Scotland, Pope, Plymouth, Trenton, Pinkerton, Troy, Liverpool, Carman, Ft. Henry, Ft. Sumter, Emerson, Longfellow, Ulysses and Joliet.

Names of states, countries or large cities were evident in this group: Dublin, Norway, Brooklyn, Berlin Center, Geneva, Rio, Moscow, Chattanooga, Ohio, Indiana, Toronto, West Point, Texas, French, Tennessee, West Jersey, Dover, Kan-

sas, Georgetown, Palestine, Rochester, New Philadelphia, Portland, Rapids City, Salem, Egypt, Shanghai, Ontario, Lehigh, Terre Haute, Canton, Eldorado and Oakland.

Indian influence in names was revealed in the following: Tiwappity, Indian Grove, Indian Creek, Indian Point, Black Hawk, Hiawatha, Indian Mound and Lost Mound.

Another assortment of odd names included such gems as: Dutch Row, Merryman, Fruit Hill, Fruitland, Dogtown, Miners, Coaltown, Slabtown, Prairie Queen, Shale City, Lime City, Alma Mater, Paradise Chapel, Church, Zion, Stringtown and Haunt-town.

Proximity to old mills was indicated in these names: Gary's Mill, Pine Mill, Crab Mills, Millbrig, Millersburg, Millville, Franklin Mills, London Mills and Duncan Mills and Millbrook.

Dozens of schools had the same names. The most common in the group included: Fairview, Pleasant Hill, Elm Grove, Oak Grove, Excelsior, Centerville, Liberty, Union, Maple Grove and Sugar Grove. And one school in Hancock County, Ill., was named McGuffey in honor of the famed author.

It was the writer's privilege to have visited practically all of the above schools while serving as photographer for over two decades in high schools, community unit schools and rural schools in three states. Much of the material in this book was gleaned during this highly enjoyable work.

Visitors to the country schools during the noon hour or recess times could witness a wide variety of games and contests. Although the rural schools never had an organized physical education program with a lot of situps, pushups, etc., the students and the teacher never lacked for exercise. They organized and even originated all sorts of games including such contests as: Red light-green light, mumble peg, King William, King of the Hill, town ball, pom-pom pullaway, needles eye, ante over, dummy (or duck) on the rock, fox and geese, steal-sticks, blind man's bluff, tag football, town ball, marbles and jacks.

Black man was another popular game. One individual would be "it" until he succeeded in tagging some one darting from one base to the other. The game gave the students a lot of exciting exercise in ducking, running, skipping and diving. In winter there were sled contests for the "cake" in distance, forts to be built and good old-fashioned snowball battles.

Baseball, however, was the No. 1 sport and nearly every school had a ball diamond somewhere on the grounds or in an adjacent pasture. Everyone big enough would plunge into the game and teachers and visitors would get into the action. Seventh and eighth grade girls became adept at the sport and some of them qualified on the official school team which competed after hours or on Saturdays against teams from nearby districts. The rural schools were thus several decades ahead of the modern trend of female participation in most school sports.

When the noon hour break arrived the children usually ate at their desks in the schoolroom. In the warm days of early fall or springtime they sat on the school steps or moved to the lawn where they had a picnic. The boys bolted their food and charged out to the baseball diamond to get the game going.

The rural teachers were a plucky lot, working under all sorts of discouraging

conditions and enduring many privations. In the period between 1900 and 1940 practically all the women teachers were unmarried. For a small salary the young women serving as teachers assumed a great deal of responsibilities in the rural community. In running the school she was a sort of jack of all trades. Beside trying to pound some knowledge into her charges she had to act as janitor, fireman, doctor and nursemaid for injuries, coach and umpire of the baseball team, school counsellor, a mediator of fist fights which developed on the playground, psychiatrist and a community consultant on all sorts of troubles.

The teachers had a high standing in the community and their decisions in various controversies were handed down with the air of authority only a judge could assert. They had the final word in arbitrating many a squabble.

The teacher had to deal with many vexing problems including petty political bickering and personal troubles. The Parent-Teacher group or the Mothers' Club were a great help to the teacher unless she did not care for too much assistance. In one school the instructor informed the writer: "If you would let them, some of the outspoken ones at community meetings would take over the running of the school."

The schools had a vital role in every rural community, serving not only as a house of learning but as a convenient rallying point, a place for picnics, polling places and in some cases temporary quarters for church services. Old-timers talk nostalgically of other activities there such as singing schools, spelling bees, debates, box socials, community get-togethers for Halloween, the annual Christmas program and the final day of school picnic which was a celebration in itself.

Many sigh regretfully as they recall this vanished form of farm life. They feel that a part of the mid-west's past disappeared with them. To them the little Red schoolhouse was the most characteristic symbol of the farming regions.

Before the end came, most of the rural schools throughout the mid-west enjoyed some improvements in equipment and accomodations although there was little change in the exterior of the buildings. Extension of Rural Electrification brought in electric lights and radios. Other changes included the introduction of telephone service, new movable individual desks, indoor plumbing, drinking fountains, pull-down wall maps and playground equipment. In the final days a few enjoyed the luxury of television.

As the schools' curriculum slowly expanded the teachers added three more R's to the traditional three — namely Responsibilities, Rights and Relationships. More and more of the rural students went on to high schools which sprang up in many cities and towns in the 1870's, 1880's and the 1890's. Before the development of the school bussing system, however, less than half of the farm youths were able to avail themselves of attending a high school.

The rural teachers and the older students divided up much of the janitorial chores such as washing windows, carrying in coal or wood for the pot-bellied stove, tidying up the school grounds, removing snow and the management of play equipment. Students vied for assignments which gave them some prestige in the school. Such jobs included the role of greeter for visitors, answering the telephone or taking over at the teacher's desk when the instructor was occasionally out of the school or busy in conferences with parents.

Songs were sung, with or without accompaniment depending on whether the

school had a piano. The pianos were usually out-of-tune old instruments which had been donated to the school by some patron of the district, just to get rid of it. If the teacher was unable to play the instrument one of the girls in the upper grades, who might be taking music lessons, would be designated as the school pianist. Songs sung included: "Old Black Joe," "Oh Susanna," "Comin' Thro' the Rye," "Precious Jewels," and "America" with its "My country tis of thee," refrain. "America" was preferred over the "Star Spangled Banner," as the wide range of the latter anthem proved too difficult for grade school singers.

The annual picture-taking day was always an event looked forward to by the students and the parents. The photographer planned one stop each year, usually in the early fall or spring months. The date was set well in advance so the boys and girls all came to school spruced up in their Sunday best and with fresh haircuts.

Mothers, with pre-schoolers in the district, were also on hand to participate in the festivities. High school girls from the neighborhood, apparently "playing hookey" for the day, also showed up occasionally.

The school photographers all operated with a very low package price and it proved to be a very economical way of getting the family's pictures taken. Little or no work was accomplished as the annual photographer's visit disrupted much of the program.

The rural schools had few such interruptions, however. The only other callers were the county superintendent of schools or his assistant, an occasional salesman selling Bibles or other books, an inspector from the state department of public instruction, and members of the school board.

One of the most difficult chores for the rural teacher was organizing special programs marking the Yuletide or other holidays. Much school time was taken in getting ready for such special events. The entire community would turn out at such occasions to hear Jimmy or Joan recite portions of famous orations, readings and poems. Short plays, musical skits and school songs were also a part of the program. The rural schools were jammed with 75 to 100 people at such festivities and after the program the mothers would bring out food-filled baskets for an old-fashioned pot luck supper which everyone enjoyed.

The annual county and district institutes were always looked forward to by the rural teachers. It gave them a brief vacation from the chores of school work. One of the rural teachers described them as follows: "Our county institute was always an inspiring, educational and entertaining affair. The district institute, however, was a different story. Much of that two-day program was quite dull but we had a gala time in the cities, going on shopping sprees, etc., which compensated for the long, boring sessions during the day."

Qualifications for teaching jobs were never too stringent throughout the century of service by the rural schools. Except for the war years, the teachers' colleges provided a never-ending supply of candidates for the positions. The yearly turn-over of positions was high as many of the young teachers moved on to better paying jobs in the city school systems. Their average stay in the country schools was about three years.

The daily schedule of the rural schools was much the same everywhere. At 9 a.m. the usual opener was the pledge of allegiance to the flag. Some of the schools opened with the Lord's Prayer and different students took turns as leaders. Mor-

No. 1 — Charter Oak Octagonal School at Schuline, Ill. (Sketch by Roscoe Misselhorn)

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No. 2 -- Elm Grove, an unusual two-story type of one-room school at Princeton, Ill.

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No. 3 — Bryant School at Princeton, Ill., in a 1900 photo.

No. 4 — Abbe Creek (1830) Oldest Standing Brick School in Iowa.

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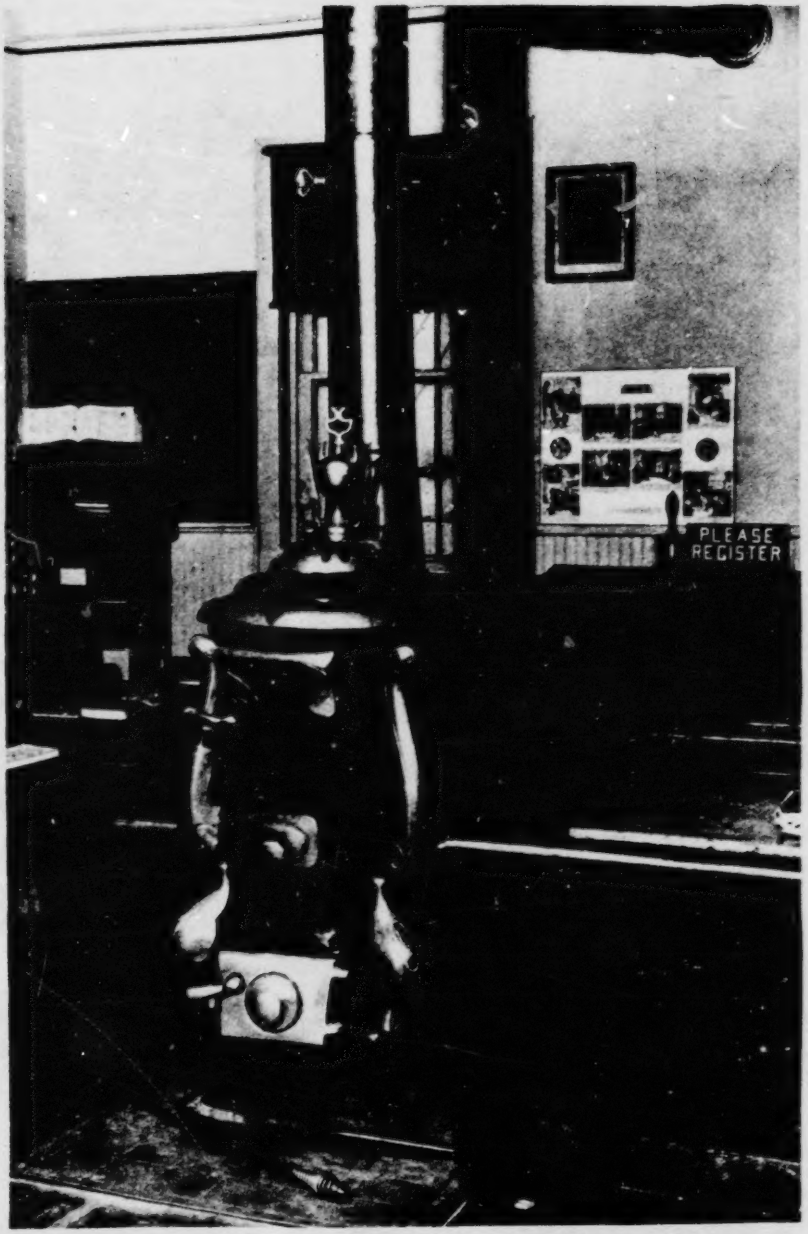

No. 5 — Interior of Abbe Creek School near Mt. Vernon, Iowa.

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No. 6 — Students at work on newspaper in Coaltown School, Moline, Ill.

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No. 7 — Classroom photo at Oak Grove School near Byron, Ill. 21

No. 8 — Winter stillness at North Star School, Muscatine, Ia.

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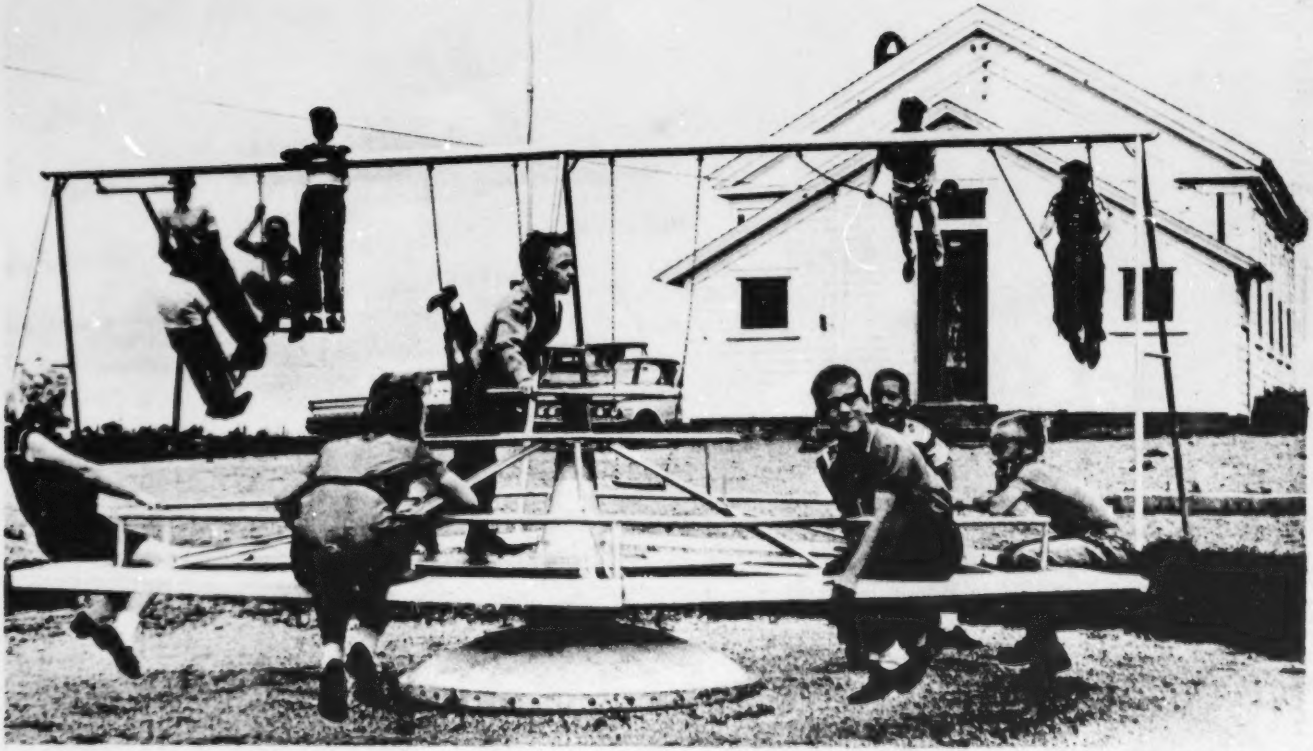

No. 9 — Playtime at Unity School near DeWitt, Ia.

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No. 10 — Iowa's smallest "college," in final year of operation in 1966.

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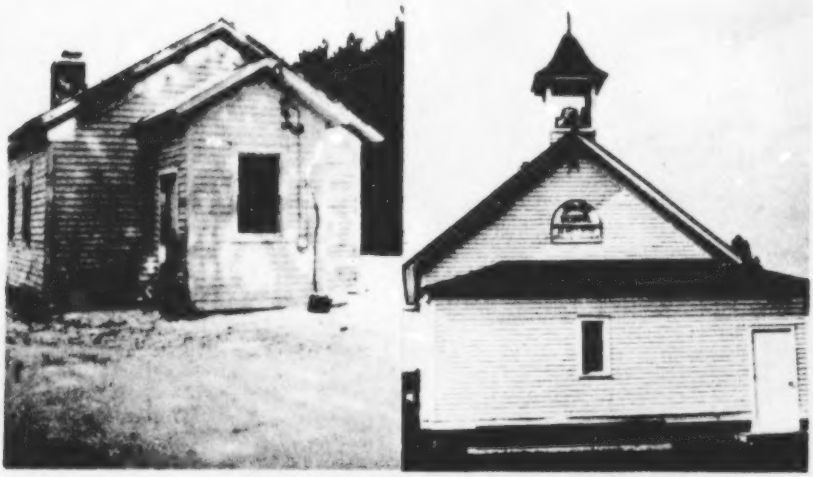
No. 11 — Little White School, Birthplace of G.O.P. at Ripon, Wis.



No. 12 and 13 — County Farm School and Joliet School, both in Wisconsin.

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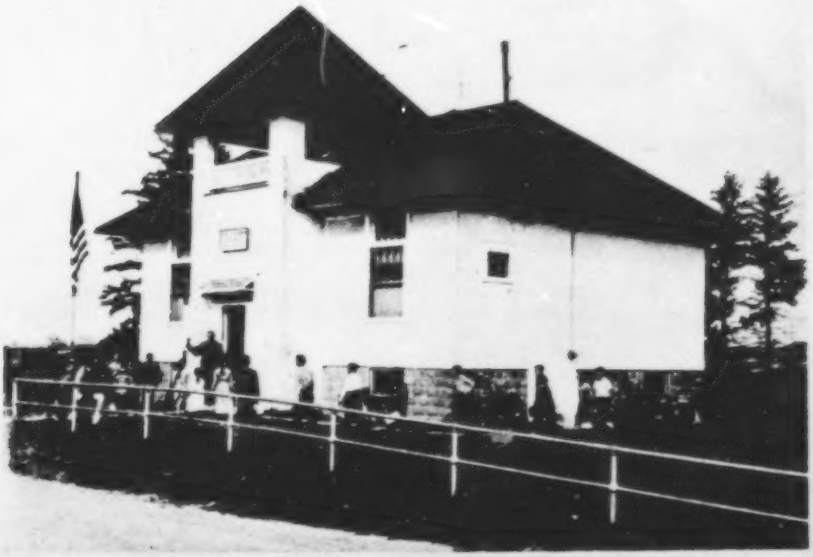
No. 14 — Franklin School in Whiteside County, Ill.



No. 15 — Sharon School near Kalona, Ia. (Note unusually large belfry.)

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No. 16 — Cottle School at Princeton, Ill.

No. 17 — Sweetland School at Muscatine, Ia. (Note ornate type cupola).

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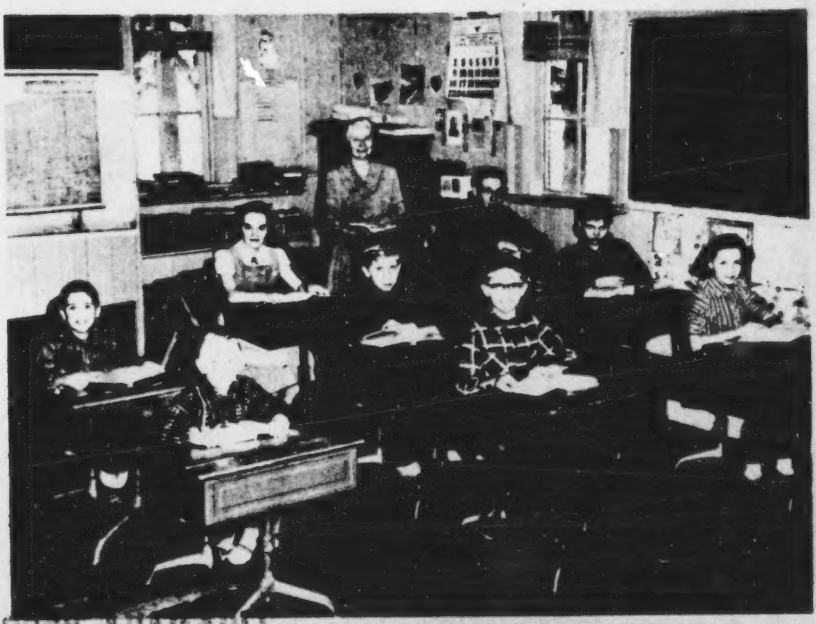
No. 18 — Every one cycles to Berlin Center School near Dover, Ill.



No. 19 — Record enrollment of 1950's shown at Otter Creek, Ill.

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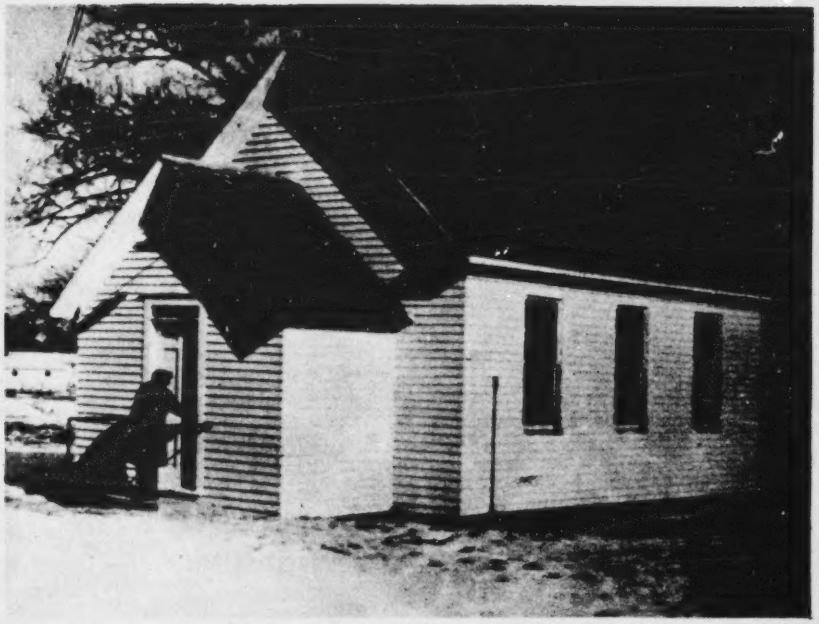
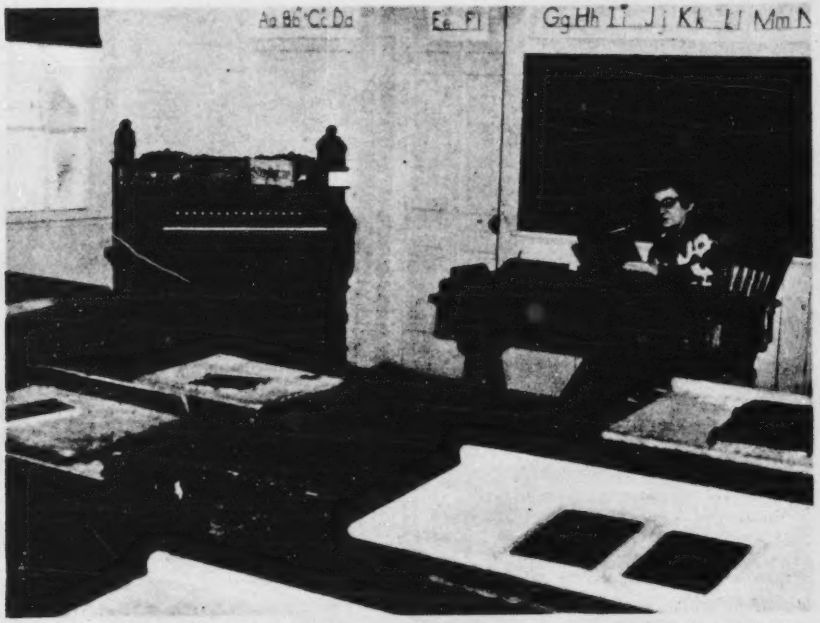


No. 20 — Restored Fairview School at Mercer County, Ill., museum.



No. 21 — Interior of Fairview School. (Note pump organ and double desks).

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No. 22 — Kalorama School near Muscatine, Ia.

No. 23 — McAuley School near West Chicago. Last operating in Illinois and one of the most beautiful one-room schools ever built.

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ning hours were usually devoted to the Three R's plus spelling classes. The afternoon hours in many schools had a mixture of music lessons twice a week, language and health on alternate days, geography and history on alternate days interspersed with art three times a week and a regular gymnasium class in the middle of the afternoon.

It was a sign of progressiveness and enterprise if a rural school published its own weekly or monthly newspaper. Where this project was attempted, all of the students joined in the staff work. News about the school, bits of unusual information, art work of the students and just plain old community gossip were combined in a very presentable publication. Families were charged two or three cents per issue as a subscription fee. The newspapers entailed much work for the teachers, who used mimeographing machines or home-made duplicators in getting the paper together.

CHAPTER III — THE FINAL DECADES

Approximately 60,000 rural schools were still functioning in the mid-west states in 1920, the year which signaled a slow 40-year decline and eventual end of this form of education. At that time Illinois had 12,000 one-teachers schools and Iowa had a corresponding number.

A rapidly declining farm population, improvements in roads and larger schools in the nearby towns and cities combined to start a piece-meal consolidation without too much planning. Advocates of complete consolidations throughout the various states were already being heard.

Consolidation might have come two decades sooner had it not been for two great turn of events in economic life and history — namely the Great Depression of 1929-1932 and the World War No. II, 1940 to 1945. Both asserted a tremendous, almost shattering effect on the rural schools. Educational and legislative leaders were too pre-occupied with other problems to divert much attention to school mergers.

Several hundred Illinois schools ceased operation in the era between 1920 and 1929 and a 1,000 or more shut their doors during the depression years. Rural schools suffered in a number of ways during this economic upheaval. Budgets were slashed by the directors, teachers' salaries were cut to the bone, some courses were dropped and all types of improvements or construction were sidetracked.

Some of the rural schools gave up the battle and simply merged with nearby towns or joined forces with a contiguous district. In some areas three small rural schools, with dwindling enrollments, combined forces in a small scale consolidation.

There was a great surplus of teachers in the depression days and as a result, wage scales were almost universally cut in half. Mrs. Christine Myers of Milan, Ill., who taught in Hancock County, said her salary was $45 a month in the heart of the depression. "There was no such thing as a contract in those days," she said. "You might meet the directors out on the ball field in the middle of the day when the next year's work would be discussed. The requirements were always the same: 'We want you to keep order in the school and play with the kids at recess and noon.'

We came to know the families well as it was quite customary in that county for a teacher to spend all night as a guest with every family some time during the year."

The outbreak of World War II in 1940 brought a new set of problems to the country schools. They had barely recovered from the effects of the depression years when a different brand of economic difficulties beset them. Wage and price controls, rationing of gasoline and food, and the manpower shortage were all keenly felt. Higher wages in the war plants drew many teachers away from their jobs in the rural areas. Salaries continued at $800 a year or less in many of the schools.

High school graduates, mostly girls, were thrust into teaching jobs with no training. Emergency certificates were easier to obtain then extra gasoline or food rationing stamps. Of the 8,445 rural schools operated in Illinois in the last year of the war in 1945, a total of 2,445 teachers were working with no college training.

Retired teachers, disabled persons, housewives, pensioners and pastors were pressed into the service. One man came out of retirement at the age of 75 and insisted on teaching a school in southern Illinois without pay, stating it was his contribution to the war effort.

Enrollment in the rural schools dwindled throughout the war owing to the great shift of population accompanying every conflict. The average attendance before 1940 was in the 20 to 25 range but in the war it had slumped to 16. About 4,000 Illinois schools struggled along with less than ten pupils. Some of the schools were down to only two or three students in their final days.

The rural school picture throughout the nation was much the same. The 1920 census showed 187,948 one-room rural schools still functioning in the 48 states. By 1944 this had been slashed to 100,000. In 1948 the nation-wide total had dropped to 74,832 and four years later it was down to 40,000. Midwest states showed a corresponding decline in the number of schools. According to a survey made in 1950 by the Council of State Governments Illinois still led in the number of one-room, one-teacher schools with 6,778. Iowa ranked second in the nation with 5,637 followed by Missouri with 5,272; Wisconsin, 5,000; Minnesota, 4,421; Kansas, 3,462; Michigan, 2,942; Indiana, 300 and Ohio, 297.

At one time Illinois had the unenviable reputation of operating a grand total of 12,912 school districts (including rurals, town and city schools), the largest in the entire country. This staggering total brought much criticism and eventually led to strong legislation to correct the situation.

Now Illinois is down to its last one-room school — the McAuley district in DuPage County near West Chicago — which is reported as "still going strong" at this writing with 26 students in its 135th year of continuous operation. Begun as a log cabin structure in 1841, it was later housed in a small frame building before the present modern building was erected.

Fully accredited by the state, the school conducts a comprehensive program including gymnasium, art, music, speech, special education and Spanish as well as the Three R's. The school has been taught 17 consecutive years by the same teacher.

Visitors are welcome at this school and open house is held in the spring. The McAuley district's operation is one of the most remarkable school activities in the nation. It has spanned several generations and more than a century of growth. History is still being made in this school.

According to the most recent figures supplied by the U.S. Department of Education 18 states in the nation have succeeded in closing all of their one-room schools. States in that category include Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin and Indiana. Michigan was listed as having 35, Ohio has three and Minnesota has two.

Missouri had as many as 25 one-room schools still running as late as 1973, the final year for all of them. Wisconsin's last one-room school in operation with eight grades was the Palestine district in Waukesha County, which shut its doors in 1970. Iowa had 100 schools still running as late as 1966, when they were all phased out of existence simultaneously.

Indiana's last public one-room school was the Chapel Hill School, Monroe County, which ceased operations in the spring of 1967. Indiana thus became one of the first states to phase out completely the rural buildings. Indiana had 4,880 one-room schools in 1930; 872 in 1940; 300 in 1951 and only 22 in 1962.

According to the latest U.S. figures in 1975 Nebraska tops the entire nation with 546 rural schools in operation. Montana is in second place with 151, California has 60 in mostly remote mountain areas and North Dakota is fourth with 59. The national total stands at 1,365 in 34 states.

It was not until the late 1940's that real progress was made in Illinois in the effort to set up larger school districts. As soon as World War II terminated, it was evident to almost all that vast changes in the educational system were coming quickly. The death knell of most of the rural schools in Illinois was sounded with the passage of state laws in 1945 and 1947, providing for county surveys and the establishment of large community units subject to the approval of the voters in the various districts. More than 4,000 rural schools were closed in Illinois between 1950 and 1955. In 1960 the number still in operation had dropped to 1,600.

The changing face of the midwestern states' educational systems was brought about by a number of factors — development of school buses capable of carrying 50 or more, more mechanized and commercialized methods of farming, a decline in farm population and agitation in many quarters to up-date the rural schools. Many educational leaders had been proclaiming for years that the schools, particularly the country schools, were standing still while the agricultural industry itself was keeping abreast of many improved methods of farming and otherwise keeping in step with progress.

Despite early success of the community unit development in Illinois, the program encountered stern opposition in some counties. Vigorous debate raged for several years over the reorganization plans. The sentimental attachment to the "Little Red Schoolhouse" proved a difficult obstacle in some elections. Farm families who were opposed to the new school setup plans, viewed them as a destruction of their way of life. They also feared higher taxes would result from the school changes. Disapproval was also expressed of "long bus rides for the children" and the fact that they would be kept so far away from their homes all day.

In the meantime a number of smaller schools in Illinois banded together, largely by townships, and set up their own consolidated districts. Under an Illinois law it is possible for such a district to function under its own school board within the boundaries of the high school district which it feeds. La Salle County, Ill., is the state leader in this type of consolidation with 10 schools operating this way. Included are such schools as Freedom, Otter Creek, Deer Creek, Dimmick, Wallace and several others.

Such consolidated districts preserve some of the tradition of the rural schools, although hardly recognizable now with their full teaching staffs, spacious gymnasiums, basketball, track and baseball teams and buildings as large as some of the grade schools in the towns and cities. A number of such rural consolidations eventually were voted into community units but the buildings continue in use as attendance centers, housing four to six grades.

Many retired teachers and some still serving in consolidated or community unit schools will inform you they treasure highly the years they spent in the rural districts. It is felt by many of the veteran teachers that there was a closer relationship between the pupils, teachers and parents.

Despite all the criticism of rural schools it was conceded that they had an integral part in the closely-knit rural community life. Those who still cling to the fading concept of the rural school contend the pupils were given closer guidance and counseling than students in classes of 30 or more in the highly organized schools.

They also contend that the students received a more thorough training in the basic fundamentals. One stated that the memorization of historic dates, multiplication tables, spelling bees and penmanship might be considered old-fashioned but in such methods the farm youths were given a solid background in the basics. Another former teacher called attention to the recent well publicized trend in some of the larger city school systems to "get back to fundamentals and put more stress on the three R's."

Many famous men including statesmen and industrial leaders who started school life in the one-room buildings, state the schools had much to commend them in spite of many difficulties. A number of the earliest attorneys and men with political bent used jobs as rural school teachers as stepping stones before embarking on their careers. Although their stay in such jobs was short they regarded the experience as a rich and rewarding one.

One such man destined to greater fame as an author and poet, was Edgar Lee Masters, who served as a rural school teacher in Fulton County, Ill., after leaving Knox College. His famous Spoon River Anthology recaptured the past in this rich historic region. President James A. Garfield took a job as a rural instructor when only 18 years old. His first work was in the Ledge Log Cabin School in Ohio where he received a salary of $12 a month and room and board. The novelist, Herbert Quick, also served early in life as a rural school teacher. Henry Ford spent part of his early life as a student at the Scotch Settlement rural school near Detroit where he started tinkering with mechanical things. Before finishing the eighth grade he was considered an expert watch repairman, serving the surrounding countryside.

A number of men presently serving in administrative posts in Illinois schools spent their early years as teachers in one-room rural schools. The same experience was shared by others who have advanced to the positions of county superintendents or assistant county superintendents.

RESTORATION PROJECTS

Rural School restoration has made considerable progress in some of the states in the mid-west. All types of construction including, log cabin, octagonal, brick, stone and frame, are represented in a wide assortment of buildings available for

tours by groups interested in observing the nostalgic past in this special character of education.

Illinois has five restored school buildings and several others being considered for such work. Its most famous restoration is that of the Charter Oak Octagonal School located near Schuline in Randolph County, Ill. The eight-sided building is one of three such landmarks in the entire nation, the others being found at Chadd's Ford, Pa., and South Canaan, Pa.

Charter Oak was in use for 81 years from the time it was built in 1872 until it closed its doors in 1953. Restoration was directed by the Randolph County Historical Society, which came to the rescue of the abandoned building in 1969, raising money for its purchase by popular subscription. The school was featured in Ripley's Believe It or Not and it has also been the subject of many articles in metropolitan newspapers and magazines.

Illinois had another octagonal school, the Octagon, three miles west of Kewanee, which was in existence until 1890 when it was replaced by a larger frame building. It was moved into a group of buildings on a farm in the neighborhood.

Another outstanding Illinois school restoration is found at Princeton, Ill., where the Red Brick School, with walls 12 inches thick, was moved intact in 1972 to its new home within the city. The Colton School, as it is officially known, now reposes as a museum in the Lovejoy Homestead complex, a prominent tourist attraction. The Colton School is completely equipped with school furnishings, including a pot-bellied stove, a school bell, the original desks and huge wall portraits of Washington and Lincoln. Conducted tours are held from May through October on week-ends from 1 to 4:30 p.m.

A century-old stone schoolhouse known as the Lincoln Park School west of Rockford, Ill., is now part of the Wagon Wheel resort complex at Rockton, Ill. The schoolhouse is frequently visited on field trips by teachers and entire classes.

The fully restored Fairview Schoolhouse is one of the features at the Mercer County Historical Society's Museum in Aledo. Visiting hours are from 1 to 5 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

Other similar restoration projects are a schoolhouse as part of a 1910 farm complex at Geneseo and the **Chamnestown** Log Cabin School of 1855, reconstructed at the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in Southern Illinois.

Iowa has several interesting school restorations. The most unusual one is a restored replica of the first log cabin schoolhouse in Iowa, established near Keokuk in 1830. The Abbee Creek School near Mt. Vernon, Ia., which was erected in 1844 ranks as the oldest brick structure still standing in the state. Other restored schools are the Walnut Grove Schoolhouse in a county park near Davenport, the old No. 1 school in the Mississippi Valley fairgrounds at Davenport, the Herbert Quick school in a City Park at Grundy Center and the Sheldahl School in Hamilton County. Another school at Farley in Dubuque County has been nominated as a Historical Landmark.

Indiana has six well known restoration projects including: The Huxford School in the Billie Creek Village near Rockville; a schoolhouse at the Conner Prairie Pioneer Settlement near Noblesville; the Goddard School near Home, an Indiana Junior Historical Society project; a school at Mecca, restored by the Mecca

Historical Society; one at the Chain O' Lakes State Park near Albion, and the Collins School on Route 120 near Orland.

Several civic groups joined in restoring the Little Red Schoolhouse in Hammond, Ind. Other schools in Indiana which have been saved by various groups are located at the town of Avilla in Noble County, the town of Southport in Marion County, at Martinsville in Morgan County and in the Monroe County Schools District.

In Ohio are found two McGuffey shrines. One is the house where the McGuffey works were born across the street from the Miami University campus in Oxford, O. The other is the McGuffey Memorial Room in the Ohio State Archaelogical Historical Society building at Columbus.

At Dearborn, Mich., in the Henry Ford Village, is found the restored log cabin where McGuffey was a teacher early in life. Michigan also boasts of three school buildings which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. They include the Eagle Harbor School, the Nottawa Stone School and the McKinley School.

Wisconsin has a remarkable number of rural school preservation projects, the best known of which is the nationally famous Little White School House in Ripon. The White School is the "Birthplace of the Republican Party," and is listed with the National Register of Historic Places. The schoolhouse was the site of a historical meeting on March 20, 1854 when a group of politicians representing the Whigs, Free-Soilers and Democrats decided to launch the Republican Party. The building now stands on the Ripon College campus and is open to visitors during the tourist season.

Other well known school restorations in the Badger State include the Willow Lawn School in the Historic Galloway House and Village at Fond du Lac, the Joliet School at the Barron County Historical Society Museum near Cameron, and the Sunnyview School next to the Chippewa Valley Museum in Carson Park at Eau Claire.

Many other school projects exist in scattered counties in Wisconsin. Among them is the Friendship Rural School Historical Society building near Loganville, the County Farm School of the Reedsburg Area Historical Society, the Clark School of the Berlin Historical Society in Riverside Park, a schoolhouse museum at Viroqua, maintained by the Vernon County Historical Society; another schoolhouse museum privately owned at Red Mound, Wis., Vernon County; and a privately owned restored schoolhouse in Monroe County.

At Sparta, Wis., the city council has donated two old school buildings to the Monroe County Historical Society and work is scheduled to get under way soon. The Lake Mills-Aztalan Historical Society is temporarily using the old Aztalan School for storage of materials preparatory to early restoration of the building.

A large number of schools, too numerous to mention, are being preserved by owners of the land on which they stand. The Wisconsin State Historical Society also advises the writer that the following historical societies also maintain schools which have been restored or are in the process of restoration work: Albion County, Brown Deer, Franklin, Ozaukee County, Walworth County, Watertown, Jefferson County and Crawford County.

Additional Wisconsin restorations include the **Sheepskin** School in the town of Albion in the southern part of the state and the **Whelan** School at Legend Park in Franklin, a suburb of Milwaukee. The latter school is maintained as a teaching museum where entire classes of students may spend the day under educational conditions of the early 1900's.

With more than a score of school projects completed or on the drawing boards, Wisconsin could very well be the national leader in the matter of rural schoolhouse restoration work. No figures are available on a national scale but it is the opinion of the writer that the Badger State can claim the No. 1 spot in the rural school preservation movement.

A nation-wide study of rural one-room school landmarks is being prepared by the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, a division of the National Park Service in the Dept. of the Interior. The work was scheduled to be under way in 1975 but was shelved. The chief of the survey, in a letter to the author shortly before publication of this book explained: "This particular project had to be postponed indefinitely because of the increasing stringencies imposed on finance and personnel by the current economic situation. It is our hope to resume this interesting and important study as promptly as possible."

CHAPTER IV — LEGENDS, LORE & ANECDOTES

A wealth of legends, folklore and anecdotes is interwoven with the history of the midwestern rural schools from the pioneer log cabin days up to the more modern times. The former teachers laugh as they recall some of their amusing experiences and an odd assortment of pranks perpetrated by their students.

The most legendary of all characters was probably the famed Buffalo Bill, whose antics during grade school days foretold the exciting life which lay ahead. Bill, as he was known to his fellow students, "played hooky" whenever the mood struck him. The legend goes that Cody was a model student until he discovered skiffing on the nearby Mississippi River at LeClaire, Ia. He was frequently absent from class while he indulged in his favorite sport.

Billy was usually accompanied to school by a three-legged yellow dog named "Skip." He took him into the schoolhouse with him one cold day and the teacher promptly ordered the canine taken out of the classroom. Billy complied and out he went with the dog, not to come back until the next day's classes.

When only 11 years old Cody put on his first Wild West show with neighborhood talent, riding a spirited young black mare. Nearly 100 years later, after Billy had become a legendary western figure, a 10-room Rural consolidated school in the same area near LeClaire, was named Cody in his honor.

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A number of teachers daily posted the names of laggards in classes and violators of school disciplinary rules. The names were customarily written in chalk on the blackboard. In one school the visiting photographer lined up the entire group of 16 in front of the blackboard which provided the only solid background. When the finished product arrived for distribution, there were the names of all the culprits blazoned on the blackboard for every family to check over.

A group of mischievous boys in one Illinois school thought they would scare their young teacher out of her wits by putting a fairly large bull snake in the middle drawer of her desk, while the instructor was out on the playground during the noon hour. An hour or so later the teacher opened the drawer and promptly discovered the snake. To the pranksters' chagrin she merely exclaimed: "My, what a beautiful bull snake," appearing delighted at the discovery. The teacher picked up the snake like a professional snake handler and walked out with it, releasing it on the school ground.

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Teachers themselves perpetrated a few pranks to outwit some of the youthful jokers. One Illinois instructor found some one's pet white mouse staring at her when she opened the middle drawer of her desk. She quickly closed the drawer without saying a word. At recess time, when the students were outside she captured the mouse and inserted it into the desk of the chief suspect. The latter reared up and jumped away from his desk when the mouse bounded out. The prank had boomeranged.

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In early school days two boys were usually appointed to fetch the water from the closest farmhouse, the nearest brook or whatever source could be found. Such appointments were always considered a great honor. The water pail was placed on a table or its contents were transferred into a huge earthenware crock. Everyone drank from the same dipper which usually hung from a rusty nail or a piece of a coat hanger. If an epidemic of colds or sore throats broke out there was not the slightest thought in those days that the commonly used dipper was the source of the ailment.

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According to legend, Indiana log cabin schools in the early 1800's were plagued by troublesome Indians at times and wandering cougars. The teachers kept a gun handy and holes were carved in the wall for protection. Legend tells of one school being beset by two cougars. The story goes that the students killed a cougar cub and dragged the carcass into the schoolroom as an exhibit of "show and tell." Two adult cougars followed the scent up to the school and vainly attempted to break into the barricaded building. Growling ferociously, they vaulted onto the roof and started to rip off the shingles. The timely arrival of two hunters caused the pair to flee into the nearby woods, where they were treed and killed.

On another occasion a fox being pursued by a pack of baying hounds dashed through the open schoolhouse door and raced wildly around the room for several seconds. The teacher and the students were almost paralyzed with fright. The fox finally vaulted through an open window, disappearing in the woods just before the hounds arrived on the scene. The dogs circled the schoolhouse but failed to enter, apparently figuring their quarry had been trapped inside. One dog finally picked up the scent and the pack disappeared into the timber.

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During the period immediately after the Civil war the average age of rural teachers was 24 for the men and 20 for the young women. The youngest girl ever to serve as teacher was reported to be an Iowa girl, Etta May Crowder, who successfully handled the job at the age of 15. She displayed unusual literary talent

and years later produced a book entitled "Pioneer Life in Palo Alto County." The youngest male teacher was the famed author, McGuffey, who was already showing literary prowess when only 13. At that tender age he took on teaching in an Ohio rural school where some of the students were several years older than the gifted instructor.

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Schools are occasionally struck by lightning and destroyed by fire. The most unusual happening of this nature occurred at the Probstei school near Davenport, Ia. In the midst of a great electrical storm during school hours, an ear-splitting crash of thunder was accompanied by a huge ball of fire inside the schoolroom. One entire wall was ripped out by the lightning but miraculously no one was injured. After the yelling and screaming by the students subsided it was found that faces of all of them had been blackened like those of minstrel end men. Two potbellied stoves had been dislodged and soot scattered over the entire room.

A disaster was also narrowly averted at the Hyler School near Lake Mills, Wis., in 1882 when quick thinking of the teacher saved her pupils from death. Observing a funnel-shaped cloud bearing down on the school, she hastily herded her charges along the north wall of the schoolroom. Moments later the cupola and a section of the roof came crashing down, splintering the seats.

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In pioneer days, the schoolmasters frequently took extraordinary measures to quell the bullies or unruly ones. The punishment then was an order to the boys to "go sit with the girls for the rest of the day." This was easily accomplished as it was customary then for the boys to sit on one side of the room and the girls on the other. The humiliation of being forced to sit with the girls was more than some of the boys could stand. For days after the incident the victim would be needled about it by the other boys.

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One of the most unusual one-room schools in the mid-west was located on Drury Island in the middle of the Mississippi River about 15 miles west of Rock Island, Ill. The teacher and about a dozen students commuted daily by boat to a camper's cabin, which had been converted into a schoolhouse. The county superintendent was also required to travel by boat on his annual inspection trips. School was maintained there for the convenience of several families residing in cabins located on a series of islands which dot the river in that area. This school suspended operations when the enrollment declined in the 1930's, shortly before World War II.

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Despite the 100% consolidations effected in most states in recent decades, a number of one-room schools have survived, continuing to operate under the control of religious groups. In some cases the groups have taken over buildings which once housed public school one-room districts. The Amish operate 17 such schools in Iowa, the majority being in the Kalona and Hazleton neighborhoods. Several have been operated in recent years in the vicinity of Yorktown, Tampico and Arthur, Ill. The Amish at Arthur operate a number of one and two-room schools with 235 enrolled. Another 160 are enrolled under the public school system, which operates eight one-room, one-teacher units at scattered places in

the district. There is also one Amish school in Indiana. One-room schools are also conducted in Illinois at several cities by the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

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The largest one-room school on record in Illinois was the 80-student Duncan School taught by George W. Soloman, who later became Macoupin County Superintendent of Schools. The largest enrollment in an Iowa school was found at Montpelier, a Mississippi River hamlet, where Miss Georgene Parrott taught 60 students.

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Birds and animals took over some of the old abandoned schoolhouses at various places. One in Iowa first became a pigeon perch and then a raccoon roost. Pigeons moved into the building shortly after it was vacated but along came a family of raccoons who first ate the birds and then established their home there.

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For some unknown reason directors of many rural schools had expressed a preference for young and unmarried women teachers as late as the era shortly before the World War II. It was a sort of unwritten law without an explanation. One veteran Illinois teacher said she had misgivings about this requirement when she signed up for a job in the Plain View School near New Boston. Although single at the time of the signing in the spring, she was married in the summer and taught almost half of the year before announcing the marriage.

Another veteran teacher, who is still active in the profession, said: "It was no wonder that school boards preferred unmarried teachers in those days. The trials of teaching in a rural school were about all that one could bear. One really had to be a dedicated teacher in those days. But there was a lot of satisfaction in molding lives and character. The same holds true today."

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Boys and occasionally girls were frequently kept after school as punishment for a wide assortment of pranks as whispering, passing notes, tardiness, pulling the braids of a girl in the seat ahead, dipping the hair into an ink well, throwing ink balls, shooting beans and paper wads or just general defiance of the usual disciplinary procedure. Some of the culprits would forfeit playground privileges for a week and others would be ordered into the cloakroom for the rest of the day.

One teacher said it was very helpful to her to have a deputy sheriff as her husband when she served as instructor in a 49-pupil school near Milan, Ill. "The job was unusually trying as there were several large boys in the upper grades and maintaining order was almost impossible. However, my husband had a habit of dropping around at different times and they never knew when he might be coming. They really feared and respected him and it served to keep the unruly ones pacified."

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Rural teachers used all sorts of conveyances and methods of getting to their school. Some rode bicycles or horses and in winter-time came in bob sleds, cutters or on skis. The oddest means of conveyance was used by a teacher in in-

diana, who came to school on the back of a trained elk or riding a cart pulled by the animal. The pupils never ceased to be fascinated by the appearance of the teacher with the elk.

In the past decade Iowa has added a number of restored one-room schoolhouses and now ranks among the leaders in that work. The old Melpine school in Muscatine County was moved several miles and occupies a prominent place in the Wildcat Den State Park. Others restored include: Antioch School in Jones County where Grant Wood learned ciphering; Bridgeport School, Jackson County; Straw College and Walnut School, Washington County; Zion School, Des Moines County; Griller School, Iowa County; and Halley School, Black Hawk County.

CONCLUSION

Possibilities for school restoration work in the mid-west are unlimited. Nearly all sections of every state have some abandoned school buildings which would present good restoration projects. Much work lies ahead if historical societies in the various areas accept the challenge.

Those interested in the program of Rural School restoration might study the various projects which have been developed in the past two decades in Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, and Wisconsin. Historical societies and civic leaders in the four states, who joined in pushing their work to a successful conclusion are to be commended for their excellent work.

As the schools rapidly disappeared in the past three decades, patrons of the dissolved districts sighed wistfully as this nostalgic form of rural life came to an end. Many felt that a part of the mid-west's historic past had faded away and along with it some of the old community spirit of the farm district.

The rural citadels of schooling have a rightful spot in the educational history of the nation. Much credit is due to the teachers who carried the torch of learning to the farm youths on the back roads. They were a dedicated group of individuals bearing all sorts of trials and privations and being poorly paid while faithfully carrying on their duties.

The one-room school simply departed from the educational scene as one of the prices of progress. Their mission had been accomplished. They were destined to be replaced just as surely as the hitching post, the watering trough, the horse and buggy, street cars and belching locomotives.

The country schoolhouses as you view them today reflect much of the rustic beauty and old charm of the nation's agricultural belt. Those still standing are probably the most characteristic and lasting symbol of the rural areas as they were in the so-called "Good old days." Educational traditions are inter-woven with the historical lore they represent. The rural schools earned a memorable spot in the state's histories and the nation's memories for their tremendous contribution to youth, growth and democracy.

The romantic lore and work of the picturesque "Little Red Schoolhouse," will never be forgotten.

A survey made in 1983 shows the one-room schools are still very much live Eighteen are still operated by the Amish in Iowa and are accredited by the state Nebraska is still the national leader with 360 one-teacher schools and Montana i a distant second with about 100.

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